

SIXTH STREET AT CONSTITUTION AVENUE NW WASHINGTON DC 20565 • 737-4215 extension 224

NATIONAL GALLERY EXHIBITS PRINTS
OF PROTEST AND SOCIAL COMMENT

WASHINGTON, D. C. August 3, 1970. "Protest and Social Comment in Prints," an exhibition of response to war, social evils and human suffering by artists from seven countries, spanning four hundred years, will be on display through September at the National Gallery of Art in Gallery G-19. All the prints, with one exception, are from the Rosenwald Collection of the National Gallery.

The exhibition includes five examples by Hans Holbein (1497/8-1543), eight by Jacques Callot (1592-1635), three by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1525-1569), a bound first edition of The Disasters of War by Francisco Goya (1746-1828) with several individual sheets from the same series, five works by Honoré Daumier (1808-1879), six by Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945), and a portfolio and a single print by Antonio Frasconi (b. 1919).

The exhibition was arranged by Diane Russell, assistant curator of graphic arts. In descriptive labels accompanying the prints, Miss Russell comments on the role of prints as an effective medium of communication in the late middle ages and early Renaissance. "The printmaker, from the 15th century to the

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present time, has often concerned himself directly with the actual events of his time--far more so than the painter or sculptor . . . Prints depicted not only religious images but also were used as political broadsides. These broadsides served the function of modern political cartoons--or, more accurately, in a capsule form, of modern newspapers--but without any intent to be 'objective.' They were impassioned and partisan.

"In this exhibition are images of extraordinary power: Bruegel's critique of man's habitual weaknesses, Goya's repulsion with war, Daumier's rage against the callous privileged classes, Kollwitz's sympathy with the exploited. Many of these prints were created in response to particular events. All, however, are essentially timeless in their comment on mankind's follies." There are five proof impressions from Holbein's series of forty-one wood engravings, The Dance of Death, in which Death is personified as the inescapable visitor to people in all stations of life.

Eight selections from The Large Miseries of War, a series of eighteen etchings by Callot done in 1633 reflect the kinds of violence he had seen armies suffer and inflict. Goya executed his famous series of etchings and aquatints, The Disasters of War, with a similar intention. But his depiction of the horrors he had seen during Napoleon's campaign against Spain and Portugal, from 1808-1814, dwells particularly on the misery of civilians caught up in war. A bound first edition and several single sheets figure in the exhibition.

A satirical, moralizing tone appears in three engravings

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after designs by Pieter Bruegel the Elder. The Rich Kitchen, The Poor Kitchen and The Misanthrope Robbed by the World, inspired by Flemish proverbs, mock human greed. Three prints from Daumier's series, Les Gens de Justice, satirize corruption in the legal profession. There are also two more sober statements by Daumier-- "Don't Meddle with the Press," a warning to the new king Louis-Philippe to avoid censorship; and Rue Transnonain, commemorating a massacre of French citizens by soldiers during riots in Paris in 1834.

Six prints by the German Käthe Kollwitz reflect her fascination with social drama in history. Three come from her Weaver's Cycle of six prints, 1894-98, inspired by a rebellion of exploited weavers in 1840 and by the Gerhardt Hauptmann play based on that revolt. The other prints, from her series of seven, The Peasant War Cycle, deal with a peasant rebellion in the sixteenth century.

A visual complement to Bertold Brecht's poem, The Song of the Storm Troopers, is presented in the Uruguayan Antonio Frasconi's 1961 portfolio of woodcuts. A separate Frasconi print, Auschwitz, evokes the concentration camp in a nightmare image only slightly abstracted from photographic records.

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For further information contact Katherine Warwick, Assistant to the Director, or Alison Luchs, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C. 20565. Area Code 202, 737-4215, ext. 224.



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PLOWING, an etching from the
PEASANT WAR CYCLE by Käthe Kollwitz
German 1867-1945
Please Credit: National Gallery
of Art, Washington, D.C.
Rosenwald Collection



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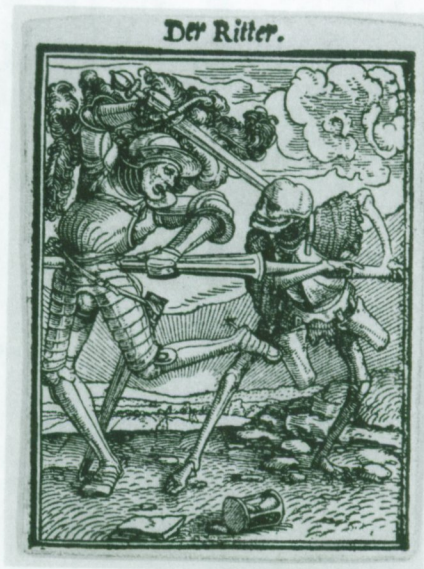


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NE VOUS Y FROTTEZ PAS
("Don't Meddle with the Press")
a lithograph by Honoré Daumier
French 1808-79

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6-2008
The Dance of Death: the Knight

a wood engraving by Hans Holbein the Younger

German-Swiss

1497/8 - 1543

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